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Letter dated 15 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you the attached concept paper for the Security Council meeting on "Women and peace and security", to be held on 29 October 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Zhang** Yesui
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Annex to the letter dated 15 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper for the open debate of the Security Council, October 2008

Women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security

1. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) signifies a landmark in the recognition of women's contribution to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and their specific needs and concerns in armed conflict and its aftermath. The resolution stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Security Council expresses its willingness to incorporate the gender perspective in peacekeeping operations.

2. Women are major stakeholders in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, disarmament and security sector reform, and post-conflict reconstruction. In many conflict and post-conflict situations, women advocate for initiating and catalysing formal peace processes, and for maintaining community support for them and their implementation. They build ties among opposing factions, increase inclusiveness and sustainability of peace processes, foster reconciliation and complement formal peacebuilding efforts to sustain the peace agreement, particularly at the grass-roots level.

3. Over the past eight years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), in its seven presidential statements on women, peace and security[1] as well as in its country-specific and thematic resolutions and statements, the Security Council has stressed the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, including in mediation and negotiation processes. It has called for increasing their participation in all aspects of peacekeeping; for their full involvement in the management of humanitarian assistance, including in decision-making; their effective participation, as well as the integration of gender perspectives in all reconstruction processes and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, including a special focus on the demobilization of women and girl combatants and their reintegration into society.

4. The combined efforts of Member States, the United Nations system and civil society have contributed to women's increased participation in selected contexts. Despite these gains, women's effective and systematic representation in formal peace processes still remains weak owing in part to insufficient political will and resources. In most conflict and post-conflict societies women remain excluded from conflict prevention and gender-based early-warning indicators are largely ignored. Greater women's participation in programming humanitarian assistance and their access to decision-making, capacity-building and employment would make humanitarian responses more effective. While Member States and the United

[1] S/PRST/2001/31, S/PRST/2002/32, S/PRST/2004/40, S/PRST/2005/52, S/PRST/2006/42, S/PRST/2007/5 and S/PRST/2007/40.

Nations are increasingly engaged in supporting gender equality in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, a majority of their efforts, however, do not systematically include gender perspectives. Greater women's involvement and equal participation are needed for Member States to increase stability and trust in the rule of law and security sector, preconditions for sustainable peace and democracy.

Focus of debate

5. On the eighth anniversary of resolution 1325, the proposed debate on women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security under the Presidency of the People's Republic of China will be an opportunity to take a strategic look at these interrelated challenges and see how long-term integrated approaches could be developed and implemented to increase women's participation.

6. Members of the Council and other Member States are invited to consider the following issues:

(a) How to establish an enabling environment for women's participation, including through an exchange of good practices of what works in countries emerging from armed conflict and what role the United Nations system could play to support these efforts of Member States;

(b) How to enlarge political space for women in peace talks and implement peace agreements and how to organize women for peace by building a constituency of women for peace and facilitating access to decision-makers and direct participation in the peace talks;

(c) How to promote gender balance and expertise in delegations and advocate for the inclusion of women's concerns in the official agenda for talks;

(d) What types of training are needed to enhance women's conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills in mediation, negotiation, constitution drafting, elections, legal reform, democratization, leadership, political parties, constituency-building and voter education.